



Andreia (ἀνδρεία) (Ancient Greek)

Fortitude, courage. A fundamental human virtue (ἀρετή) during the Archaic and Classical periods of Greek history, connoting the ideas of endurance, manliness and martial valor. Throughout the ancient period the supreme value of the virtue of *andreia* was often challenged in favor of other traditional virtues, such as wisdom, temperance and justice, but it nonetheless remained an indispensable trait of character, a prerequisite for a fulfilled human life (Zavaliy, 2020).

Etymologically, the term is traced to ἀνέρ ('a male human') and the evolution of the word proceeded from this common Homeric noun to a possessive adjective ἀνδρείος ('what properly belongs to men') and, finally, to a re-substantized ἀνδρεία – 'manliness.' While ἀνδρεία does not yet appear in Homer, various compounds based on the root ἀνέρ are frequent. The earliest known occurrence of a substantive ἀνδρεία is found in Aeschylus (*Seven against Thebes*, 49-54), c. 467 BCE; the word becomes quite common since Herodotus' *Histories* (c. 425 BCE) and the concept is theoretically explored by Plato and Aristotle.

Although the word *andreia* is post-Homeric, the virtue that it stands for is central to the conception of a fulfilled male character in both epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. A person devoid of martial courage is branded as base and lacking in masculinity, i.e., the qualities that are essential for a genuine hero in the Homeric world. Defying fear of death and voluntarily putting one's life in harm's way is seen as a primary social duty for a Homeric nobleman, while the low origin is frequently associated by the author of the epics with innate cowardice. The proper motivation for exhibiting courage on a battlefield, for Homer, is neither future spoils, nor safety of the community – it is rather the quest for personal "shining glory" (κλέος ἐσθλόν) that survives in posterity even if the hero should fall in war (e.g., *Iliad* 5.1-4). The exclusive, aristocratic nature of courage was somewhat democratized by the 7th century BCE poets, Tyrtaeus and Callinus, whose martial elegies exalt willingness to die for one's fatherland while promising that even an ordinary soldier may achieve the status of a semi-divine Homeric hero by giving his utmost on the battlefield.

An important conceptual shift with regard to *andreia* occurs toward the end of the fifth century BCE. Despite its straightforward etymological connection with masculinity, Herodotus for the first time ascribes *andreia* to a woman (Artemisia), who fought valiantly on the side of the king Xerxes during the Persian invasion into mainland Greece (480 BCE) (*Histories*, 7.90-99). The traditional Homeric understanding of courage as a supreme *arete* of male warriors was further eroded by Aristophanes' comedies, where belligerent and war-thirsty characters, ostensibly professing to follow the Homeric *ethos*, are the common targets of scathing ridicule. A new and radical step was taken by Plato in the beginning of the 4th century BCE. In the *Laches*

there is a clear tendency towards the widening of the scope of courageous actions with Socrates suggesting, contrary to the established tradition, that not only soldiers in battle are the ones who can manifest courage, but also those suffering the perils of the sea, resisting the fear of pain, fighting a disease, coping with poverty or confronting a politically precarious situation. All these people are potentially exhibiting essentially the same virtue (191d1-e1). Moreover, Socrates is willing to include in the category even those who “are mighty to contend against desires and pleasures” (191e1), i.e., the individuals showing unusual level of self-control in the face of strong temptations.

Plato’s overly liberal interpretation of *andreia* did not go unchallenged. A spirited defense of the (roughly) Homeric understanding of *andreia* was attempted by Aristotle, although at much more sophisticated level. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle is primarily concerned with demarcating genuine courage from the many spurious forms of this virtue. The definitional restrictions that Aristotle places on the virtue of courage exclude from the set of courageous agents anyone, who risks his life outside the context of a war, which, in many ways, can be seen as a philosophical vindication of the Homeric ideal of a courageous warrior (Zavaliy, 2017). The extremely narrow understanding of the conditions under which genuine *andreia* can be manifested, as well as a number of other overly demanding requirements for the attribution of this virtue, is what likely prompted David Pears to suggest that “Aristotle’s concept of *andreia* does not map onto our concept of courage” (2004, p 12). Indeed, the Greek ideal of a courageous agent is closely tied to the social and political context of the ancient civilization and its relevance to the radically different conditions of contemporary world would require a significant reinterpretation (Zavaliy and Aristidou, 2014).

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